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ABSTRACT

A study field tested and evaluated an instructional approach to parent education that tried, from a developmental perspective, to help parents become aware of their parenting practices. A program was developed to support parents in becoming aware of personal themes and actions that influenced the nature of parent-child interaction and in becoming aware of personal themes about their own growth as parents. The instructional design incorporated Newberger's (1977) developmental continuum of parental awareness of children and theme expressions parents used in conceptualizing child rearing patterns. Field testing and evaluation of the program was completed in five educational settings, including secondary and adult education settings, at-risk population settings, and higher education. Thirty-one parents participated. The educational program reflected three phases of learning: parental awareness of support-restrict theme expression, theme elaboration and linkage to existing perceptions of parenting practices, and reorganization and reevaluation of parenting practices. Pre- and post-assessments and interviews assessed degree of change in levels of awareness and patterns of theme expression. Parental growth was most evident in theme expression. Parents became more child focused and less self and culture bound in their perspectives. (Appendixes include 32 references, data tables and figures, and examples of levels of awareness and theme expression.) (YLB)

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A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO PARENTING EDUCATION: PARENTING AS A GROWTH PROCESS

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A Developmental Approach to Parenting Education: Parenting as a Growth Process

Problem and Purpose

As parenting roles have changed due to social pressures and as continued breakdown of the extended family has left parents with few support networks, parents increasingly turn to their own devices in understanding the complexity of parenting practices. Recognition of the many stresses that change brings to families and the possible long-term negative consequences, coupled with knowledge about the powerful role that the family plays in the development of their children has encouraged more public consideration for providing support and education for parents in their child rearing practices.

Therefore, parent education has become an increasingly important alternative to supporting parents in their child rearing roles. Understanding children through developmentally appropriate principles guide the curriculum often used in parent education programs (Berger, 1991; Cataldo, 1987; Fine, 1989; Powell, 1989; Weiss & Jacobs, 1988). However, developmentally appropriate principles focus on the developing child with little connection to the developing parent. While knowledge of child development is central to parenting effectiveness, focusing primarily upon on the child's growth leaves gaps in parent's understanding of their own growth process as a parent (Belsky, 1984; Bigner, 1989; Brooks, 1987; Galinsky, 1987; Goodnow, 1984,1988; Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Pillemer & McCartney, 1991). Simply providing parents with information about children has been cited as insufficient for transforming parental practices to become more child-focused (Bromwich, 1981) and in helping parents develop an understanding of their own growth process as a parent (Belsky, 1984; Galinsky, 1987; Miller, 1988).

Parental awareness as a developmental component becomes ever more complex and encompassing as parents become more able to consider the "other" as a unique individual and can perceive their own growth and change along with that of their child in their enmeshed relationship. Parent's awareness of their own growth enables and fosters similar growth in their children (Bronfenbrenner, 1990; Newberger, 1977, 1980, 1983). Few studies have investigated parent education from a developmental approach that focuses on parent growth in self-awareness and in levels of conceptualizing one's child and parent-child relationships. Educational approaches are needed that help parents become aware of parenting as a growth process and probe the underlying ideas that guide their parenting practices.

Building on previous studies investigating parental growth (Newberger, 1977, 1980; Brooks, 1987; Galinsky, 1987), the present study field tested and evaluated an instructional approach to parent education that sought, from a developmental perspective, to help parents become aware of their parenting practices. The purpose of this study was to develop a parent education program that supported parents in: (a) becoming aware of personal themes and actions that influence the nature

of parent-child interaction, and (b) becoming aware of personal themes about their own growth as a parent. The instructional design incorporated Newberger's (1977) developmental continuum of parental awareness of children and theme expressions parents' used in conceptualizing child rearing patterns.

Conceptual Framework.

Drawing from the developmental theories of human growth and change, several perspectives have contributed to an understanding of change in parental attitudes and behaviors. Developmental theory has provided the basis for understanding human development by recognizing that general individual capacities unfold in an orderly manner, yet are unique to a given individual, and are influenced by the individual's interactions with the environment (Selman, 1980; Selman & Schultz, 1990; Sroufe & Cooper, 1988). Development has been defined as the attainment of developmental norms and individual potential that enable further advancement toward increasingly complete, encompassing and complex levels (Selman, 1980). Development as it relates to parental awareness and theme expression of child rearing practices will be the focus of this section.

Parental Awareness

Research on structural cognitive-development theory, the study of the way individuals organize and develop their understanding the physical and social aspects of the world, has been applied to conceptualizing how parents perceive and understand their own parenting practices (Newberger 1977, 1980; Selman, 1980). An underlying assumption of this theory is that the organization and developmental level at which an individual perceives others, relationships, and roles has a direct correlation to behavior. Intellectual capacities are important components in interpreting and understanding parent-child relationships. The ability to perceive and understand the cognitive and emotional aspects of themselves and their children as people, interpersonal interaction, and their parental role changes with increasing interpersonal maturity. Reasoning and action are thought to be interrelated.

Based on structural cognitive-development, Carolyn Newberger (1977, 1980) has identified a continuum of four levels of parental awareness. These mental structures are hierarchically organized into qualitatively different levels which describe increasingly mature and comprehensive awareness of how parenting can be construed. This model outlines levels of parents' conceptions of their children, their role as parents, and the parent-child relationship. Newberger's model has been used in research involving a wide range of parent populations, as well as in clinical work with parents. The construct of parent awareness is defined by Newberger (1980) as the knowledge system with which a parent makes sense out of their child's responses and behavior and formulates policies to guide parental actions. Levels of awareness are assumed to be developmental in that as children mature, conceptions of parenting will tend toward progressively higher levels of

interaction-oriented reciprocal parent-child relationships. Passage through levels is hierarchical as well as sequential, building from previous levels (Newberger, 1978; Selman, 1980; Selman & Schultz, 1990). In addition, parents with fewer years of parenthood have lower levels of parental awareness than individuals who have been parents for a longer time as parental awareness is believed to increase with parental experience. Through the parenting process, parental growth progresses from that of self-centered egoistic conceptions, to conventional wisdom promoted by cultural norms, followed by individual subjective experience and exchange, culminating in analytic conceptions of mutual interaction within an interdependent system. (See Appendix for the Parental Awareness Model.) Each progressive level of parental awareness has been thought to bring about increasingly more child-sensitive perspectives as parents gain a greater capacity to reflect upon personal and child growth. Successive levels of coming to know and understand interpersonal experiences are thought to be qualitatively different and more comprehensive as cognitive restructuring occurs.

Developmental foundations for self-regulation, self-concept, relating to others, language, and representational thought which are established during infancy and early childhood are affected by the quality of parent-child relationships during these critical developmental years (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Brazelton & Cramer, 1990; Bretherton & Waters, 1985). Parents who are sensitive and responsive to their child's needs, who engage in reciprocal exchange with their children, and who provide a nurturing environment that is consistent with their child's developmental level greatly enhance their child's development (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Clarke-Stewart, 1973; McGovern, 1990. Capacities to provide nurturing environments require perspective taking (awareness of the other), through coordinating progressively more mutual perspectives of self and others in social interactions (Newberger, 1983; Selman, 1980). Furthermore, research supports a belief that establishment of patterns of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction arise out of sustained, strong, mutual attachment and development (Bromwich, 1981; Bronfenbrenner, 1990; Clarke-Stewart, 1973; Epstein & Evans, 1979; Field, 1980b; Mc Govern, 1990; Sameroff, 1984).

Theme Expression

Identified in both parent-focused child development research and in clinical work with parent (Brazelton & Cramer, 1990; Clarke-Stewart, 1973), the patterns of sensitivity, responsiveness, reciprocity, and support may be thought of as cluster of related themes identifiable across many different parenting situations, across children's developmental stages, and across parental contexts such as social class. Themes are a very broad type of knowledge that generate, organize, and give meaning to actions for carrying out goals. Themes may be thought of as perspectives or mental views. Themes reflect a deep level, motivations, interests, and meanings that underlie immediate

goals a person may have in a specific situation as well as a person's long term goals. Because themes are believed to generate goals, they are the ultimate filter that influences what a person notices and the ultimate generator of a person's goal-focused moves in the real world (Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich, & Anderson, 1988).

Relationships between parental awareness level and themes as mental views have implications for understanding how parents perceive and attend to child rearing practices. A conceptualization of contrasting theme clusters underlying human interaction, those of support and restrict human development, can be found in the Appendix. Sensitive parents are thought to identify more accurately their child's needs. These themes can be viewed as a continuum. Responsive parents provide contingent, consistent, and appropriate responses to their childs' cues and change their approach to fit the child's developmental stage (Clarke-Stewart, 1973). Responsive actions require both cognitive and emotional availability (Brazelton & Cramer, 1990). When parents behave in an attentive, responsive manner, their children are more likely to develop trustful or secure attachment relationships and to experience accelerated development (Ainsworth, et al., 1978); McGovern, 1990).

Parents who engage in reciprocal exchange with their children read each other's cues accurately and are responsive to each other. Reciprocity involves mutual give and take and turn-taking in which both parent and child contribute to and influence their interaction in an active and major way (Clarke-Stewart, 1973; Brazelton & Cramer, 1990). Support development themes entail engaging in deep reflective, thoughtful, and deliberate planning by the parent of an environment that is stimulating and enriching visually, verbally, and with appropriate materials. Parents also support their child's development by trusting children to be capable and competent, participating in children's activities as a partner, and allowing children to actively explore even though it might be messy and not very convenient (Bromwich, 1981; Clarke-Stewart, 1973). A supportive environment provides children with opportunities to develop their capacities which, in turn, makes it possible for them to participate in and benefit from increasingly challenging experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1990). Research suggest that children who grow up in warm, nurturing relationships in which these qualities predominate are less likely to turn to drug abuse and adolescent sex to try to fulfill dependency needs unfulfilled earlier in life (McGovern, 1990). Such children are more able to establish satisfying relationships with others throughout life, including their own children.

In contrast to the cluster of support development themes described above, other themes restrict development. Insensitivity, unresponsiveness, intrusiveness, and control are behaviors where parents ignore, interfere with or seek to restrict the actions of another. For example, insensitive parents may fail to notice their children's cues, signals, and messages. Unresponsive parents act in ways that are unconnected with and, therefore, unresponsive to their children's

needs, interests, and goals. Such parents respond only to their own schedules without considering their children's states and needs. These parents are emotionally and cognitively unavailable to their children. When interaction does occur, it is limited to brief, superficial encounters regarding impersonal routines and schedules. Parental insensitivity and unresponsiveness result in the child's needs being ignored. This conveys to children a sense of disinterest in them on the part of the parent, a sense that they don't matter, that they are unimportant (Maccoby, I980). Children who experience insensitive caregivers during their formative years are more likely to have troubled adolescence and when they become parents, to perpetuate a cycle of unmet needs and troubled children from one generation to another (Bretherton & Water, I985; McGovern, I990).

Intrusive behavior refers to interfering in another's interests, plans, goals, relationships, and activities such that the other's well-being, autonomy, and self-expression are reduced or prevented. The parent intrudes into the child's life in ways that interfere with, restrict, and prevent the child from pursuing his or her own interests and goals and developing his or her own perspectives. The intrusions are in the service of the parent's needs, interests, goals, and perspectives. Parents may reflect intrusiveness when they intervene by providing unwanted help and advice when a child makes an error or encounters difficulty. Intrusiveness in such cases results from an intent to be helpful that is unaccompanied by sensitivity to the other person.

Controlling parents restrict children's activities unnecessarily in ways that limit childrens" development and learning by exercising power and authority over the child (Maccoby, I980).. Such parents may actually be able to sense their children's needs, but instead of empathizing with and responsively meeting their children's needs, they use their insight into the child to manipulate the child in ways that serve their own ends.

Parents who express restrict themes often experience their children's demands as an irritating interference with their own primary goals. When restrict development themes predominate, parent-child interactions are likely to be characterized by bargaining or dominance of one member's goals over another's goals and using directive approaches in guiding children rather than suggestive ones (Maccoby, I980).

The relationship between developmental levels of parental awareness and between themes has not been established empirically. However, investigating these relationships has implications for designing parenting programs that help parents develop greater perspective taking and sensitivity toward themselves and heir children in shared acceptance of each other as a developmental process.

Methodology

Site Selection, Participant Recruitment and Group Description.

Field testing and evaluation of the parent education program was completed in five educational settings including secondary and adult education settings, at risk population settings, and higher

education. A total of 31 parents enrolled in five parent education programs in a large metropolitan area experienced the parent education program over a six-ten-week period. Participants included first and second time adolescent parents, single parents, highly educated parents, high school drop-outs, middle income, and low income parents.

Directors of Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) programs, counselors of high risk parents referred to intervention programs located in community service centers and medical clinics, and directors of child care centers were contacted about the opportunity to participate in the field test. ECFE programs established in Minnesota are parent education programs which were created in 1975 and grew rapidly during the 1980's as a result of legislative action which gave school districts state funds and option to levy local funds to support them through their adult and community education units. Sites were selected based upon the following set of criteria: (a) program enrolled primarily first or second time parents of infants, (b) program participants within or across programs represented a mix of socio-economic status and educational backgrounds, (c) parents enrolled in programs and program staff were willing to participate in the study, and (d) the site could accommodate the instructional program within their schedule and program structure.

Field-test sites included three school district sponsored adult education parent education programs, one school district sponsored program for teen age parents, and a University-sponsored child care program. Two of the school district adult education programs served primarily middle class parents. The third school district adult education program was an outreach program for at-risk adult parents. The teen parents were high school students, or students getting their GED diploma. Parents from the University child care program included professionals who had completed doctorate degrees and single parents completing baccalaureate degrees. Participation in the study was voluntary. Tables 1-4 provide a profile of the groups with respect to gender, age, educational background and number of children.

(INSERT TABLE 1,2,3,4)

Most participants in the study were female. Sites 1 & 2 were made up of middle class participants who were either full-time mothers or mothers who worked part time. All were married to spouses who worked full time. Participants at these two sites were somewhat older age compared with the other three groups. Most had completed some college work and several had completed college degrees. The median number of children for these two sites was 1.5 with median age of child 1.81.

The four male participants were enrolled in programs at Sites 3(Outreach), 4 (University), and 5 (Teen Parenting). Program participants in Site 3: had a composition quite different from the others in that they were individuals referred to a community Early Childhood and Family Education Center through compensatory programs for their children such as Head Start. Participants were

single mothers who did not work and received Aid to Families with Dependent Children, a mother with a working spouse, and a father who worked part-time in the evening when his working spouse was home to care for their child. These participants all lived in a subsidized housing complex and were bussed each week by the school district to the program site. Program staff rode the bus each week to the housing complex where they went to participant's apartments to encourage them to attend the session that day. Outreach group parents had completed high school, although several had accomplished this fete through the GED program. One of the group had completed a short technical college program and another had one year of college. Median age of this group was in the 25-30 range, median number of children 1.5 with median age of children 3.47.

Site 4: was created especially for this study drawing from a pool of interested parents of young children at the University-campus child care center. Participants were University staff and students whose children were cared for during the day by the center. This was a diverse group reflected in the range of educational level and family structure of parents enrolled. Educational level ranged from students currently enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program to parents who had completed doctoral degrees. This group included a single mother who had been a teen parent, a married mother who worked part-time at the university and was enrolled in a graduate program, and a married couple. All of the parents enrolled in this program had only one child. Median age was in the 30-35 range and median age of child was 2.10.

At Site 5:, participants were composed of four mothers and two fathers. This group was the most homogeneous of the groups in age since all were teenage parents. Some of the teens lived in their own house hold with their child, some lived with their parents, and some had established a household with their child's other parent. The program in which the teens were enrolled was part of an alternative high school completion program for teen-age parents located in a suburban high school. These parents had one child with the exception of one of the teen who had two children. Median age of children was 1.6 years.

Program Implementation.

The program was implemented in the five sites in various ways that fit the particular audience and the existing program at each site. In sites 1 and 2, (suburban, school district sponsored adult parent education programs), the instructional program was implemented over a ten week period. In site 3, (school district sponsored adult education outreach program for at-risk parents), the program was implemented for six weeks. This site also had some additional limitations due to the sporadic attendance of these parents even though transportation was provided from their home to the school site. These limitations make it highly questionable if it could be concluded that the program was fully implemented in this site. The number of sessions in each phase of the program was reduced in these two sites to accommodate the shorter time frame. Site 4, the University

child care site, was similar to sites 1 and 2 in attendance, but the program was implemented over a period of 6 weeks due to parent's heavy work schedules. In site 5, (the teen parenting program), the program was implemented over a ten week period. In this site only, the regular instructor taught the sessions after receiving training from the researcher in the theory underlying the program and procedures for implementation. In all of the other sites the same researcher taught the sessions.

Participation in the study began prior to the first instructional session with an hour long pre-interview conducted at the parent's home or at an arranged site. Participants then attended the parenting program sessions which were scheduled for one and one half hours each week. During the instructional program video-taped segments were viewed by the parents followed by discussion which was audio-taped for further analysis purposes. These recordings included all class discussions related to the questioning sequence and other verbal interchange that occurred among participants and between participants and the instructor. Participation in the study ended with a one-hour post-interview following the final sessions. Pre-and post-data in addition to the interview were obtained to determine cognitive changes related to levels of parental awareness.

Phases of Learning

The educational program reflects three phases of learning: (a) Parental awareness of support-restrict theme expression; (b)Theme elaboration and linkage to existing perceptions of parenting practices; and (c) Reorganization and re-evaluating of parenting practices. These inter-related phases of learning were adapted to each site over the six-ten weekly sessions.

Phase one: Sessions 1 through 3. Trust and rapport was established among the participants and with the instructor through several. Instruction began by introducing video-taped cases of parents and children engaged in play depicting support and restrict development scenes . These contrasting scenes of parent-child interaction reflected surface level features that are concrete and sensory, and deep-level inferred features that reveal underlying meanings, consequences, with implications for alternative parenting practices. An open-ended questioning format was used to help parents generate their own observations, reactions, insights, interpretations, and conclusions. Parents' childrearing beliefs were challenged through discussion stimulated by the video scenes. Discussion centered upon parent's conceptual interpretation of what they saw happening in the video cases and connecting what they saw to their own parenting practices.

Video-taped scenes were not explained, interpreted, or narrated. Discussion was stimulated, if needed, by the instructor posing open-ended questions. The sequence of these questions began with elicitation of "what was noticed", becoming more specific " what was the child or adult trying to do" , and then moving on to evaluate the appropriateness of the adults actions from the

perspective of both adult and child. These questions focus parents' attention on intentions of the adult and of those of the child in the scene and engaged parents in considering assumptions the adult in the scene seemed to be making about children. Finally, questions focused upon cues that provided information about feelings, on the long-term consequences and implications of patterns observed and on suggestions and recommendations. This sequenced discussion helped parents construct an understanding of conditions under "developmental role taking" and awareness of self and other.

Phase 2: Sessions 4 through 6. More varied and diverse video-taped case situations depicting scenes involving parents and toddlers and preschoolers interacting in daily routine situations were introduced. Discussion on personal childrearing ideas and practices continued with the same questioning format used in previous sessions. This questioning sequence probes for deeper understanding of actions and behaviors. As parents develop deeper understanding of their own parental growth they are asked to reflect upon new meanings that this awareness may have for them. Approximately two-thirds of the way through the program, a stimulated recall procedure was conducted in the parent's home. Stimulated recall is a self-reflective procedure used by researchers to study people's thinking (Calderhead, I981). This procedure was conducted by the researcher who taught the weekly sessions and involved the parent and their child in a play episode which was tape recorded and then reviewed and discussed by the parent with the instructor. This aspect of the instructional program helped support parents' in exploring parental growth processes in their own parenting practices.

Phase Three: Sessions 7 through 10. Parents were exposed to increasingly varied interpersonal interaction situations involving adults and older children in school, family, and peers. These diverse situations reflected interactions across family relationships and life span development. Previous patterns of questioning and discussion was continued in relation to these scenes to foster parent's deeper understanding of perspectives of self and others as well as further awareness of parental growth processes. The questioning format to stimulate discussion was continued in relation to these scenes to foster parents connecting parental awareness to their childrearing practices. Concepts introduced in the previous weeks were reinforced as parents shared examples of the type of interaction they saw happening in their own parenting practices. The final two sessions were devoted to the post-data collection procedures and to discussion focused on what parents had learned about interacting with their child and on linking parental growth to childrearing practices. Final processing of perceptions of parenthood and generation of new insights on parenting experiences concluded the program. Participation ended with a one hour post-interview following the final class session.

Data Collection

Several types of data were collected. Pre-and-post assessments were administered to assess degree of change in levels of awareness and patterns of theme expression. During the first class session a Background Questionnaire was administered to identify and describe demographic information including level of education completed, parental status (number and ages of children), and experience with children.

Pre-and post-interviews provided a means of determining parents' levels of awareness and patterns of theme expression. The interview in all sites followed Newberger's (I977, I980) semi-structured Parental Awareness Interview format. The interview focused on parental reasoning and meanings related to perceptions of their child as a person and the nature of parenting practices. During the interview parents were asked to describe their child, what they enjoy about their child, what they don't enjoy about their child, what parenting is like, what about parenting is satisfying, what is difficult, what children need from their parents, how parents know what children need, and what goals they have for their children. These questions reflect the construct of parental awareness described earlier-the beliefs by which parents make sense out of their child's responses and behavior and formulate polices to guide parental action. This hour long interview probed for deep- level understanding of personal parenting practices and parental growth in concert with the growing child. Inter-rater reliabilities of .84 and .96 and an internal consistency coefficient of .81 have been reported for the coding documentation for this interview (Newberger, I980). Construct validity for the stages of parental awareness has been reported for the developmental sequence, structural wholeness, and the relationship between developmental level and behavior.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher and tape recorded in all sites except the teen parent program. There the regular school instructor did the interviews with the teens to assure willingness of the teens to participate in the interview and sufficient rapport with the interviewer to obtain meaningful data. Even with their own instructor conducting the interviews, the teens were reluctant to have their interviews taped. Consequently, in this site interviews were recorded through note taking by the interviewer. This resulted in more limited interview data in this site than in the other sites. In addition, because of the reluctance expressed by parents in both the teen group and the outreach group to be involved in procedures that were perceived by these groups as intrusions upon their privacy, only one interview was conducted in these two sites. While this modification provided data regarding the cognitive development of parents, the modification prevented discernment of pre to post change in expression of parental awareness in these two sites.

Data Analysis.

Data were analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Descriptive statistics were used, and content and protocol analysis procedures were applied to the in-depth interviews. Data were segmented and coded according to procedures recommended by Newberger (I980). These procedures entail coding a persons' response to an interview question by one of three topics -parenting, child, and relationship. Topics were then segmented by parental awareness level and issue area. Issues were not variables relevant to this study and were not coded, however issue areas were used to determine and verify topic code. The four parental awareness levels, described earlier, were egoistic, followed by conventional, then individualistic, and ending with analytic. Prior levels of development are assumed to be embedded in a reorganized form. These topics, sub-issues and levels of parental awareness create a 123-cell matrix.

Coding involved assigning a cognitive level code (when more than one level was reflected in a response the highest level was assigned), and one of three topic codes. When more than one topic was reflected as the focus of the response, the response was split by topic. All of the parental awareness level and topic coding was done jointly by three researchers using a procedure in which the code assigned to each response was negotiated. Following initial coding, the codes were checked again twice by two of the researchers using the negotiation procedure.

Proportions were calculated for coded responses in terms of topic, theme, and parental awareness level. Pre-and-post proportions were then compared using the t-test for correlated data.

Findings and Discussion.

Findings indicated that parents' theme expression changed from pre-to-post interview.

Parental Awareness

Table 5 summarizes participants' levels of parental awareness obtained from Newberger's Parental Awareness Interview. The majority of the participants (N=21) were at the conventional level. Parental practices at this level focus upon conventional norms, including age-related norms for children's development as well as societally prescribed norms for child-rearing. Conventional expressions can be illustrated by the following response by one of the parents to the question what do you expect from your child?

> (RO 042) "For my three year old, I have different expectations that my one year old. He is beginning to learn about rules so I have expectations of him that are very different. As he gets older, you give them more boundaries and privileges."

Only four individuals were at an individualistic level. Parents at this level view their child as a unique individual who may be different from the norms, in contrast to conventional level parents who view their children as reflecting a type or a "normal" child. Individualistic level

expressions are illustrated by the following response to the question what do you enjoy about your child?

> (UMCC052) " I like to play with her with her toys and get involved in some of that imaginative play. She likes me to do that and I found that a lot of fun. We sit and have wonderful conversations either in play or during the day. It is more fun now that she has started to develop her verbal skills more."

One parent reflected parental awareness at an analytic level. Parents at this level view their parenting, themselves, and their children as embedded within interacting, mutually influential systems of relationships and see themselves as well as their children as growing and maturing through the process of parenting. An example of analytic level expressions is:

> (UMCC 053) " I wrestle with the discipline and that balance between kind of stifling her and not supporting her and I really do think it starts very young. That is a piece that I feel the hardest for me."

Three parents viewed their parenting practices in egoistic terms. At the egoistic level parents see children only in terms of their effect upon the parent, in terms of the parent's interests and needs, and from authoritarian perspectives. An example of egoistic expression is:

> (STLP 050) " I have had a very hard time with her and in the long run it was worth it. Now I just sit down and say, Hey, if you are not going to do something, then you sit there for 15 minutes or you get a slap on the hand. You can't do nothing all day, just stay in the house."

With respect to group participant profiles, differences and similarities among the groups can also be detected in Table 5. The two groups of suburban mothers were similar in the predominance of conventional level perspectives represented and the small minority of individualistic level individuals. Egoistic level individuals predominated in the outreach group, which was the only group in which parents at this level were represented. The University group was as diverse in cognitive level as it was in demographic characteristics. Three levels of parental awareness were represented in this group, the only group which contained an individual at the analytic level. Conventional perspectives predominated in the teen group.

(INSERT TABLE 5)

Interview scores for several individuals suggested that they were "in transition" between cognitive awareness levels. These individuals had almost, but not quite, an equal number of responses at the next lowest or next highest cognitive parental awareness level. The teen group contained two such individuals. The interview scores of these two individuals indicated that they still had many egoistic level perspectives but that their conventional level responses slightly outnumbered their egoistic level responses. The Suburban Site I had one transition parent. This

parent's conventional level responses only slightly outnumbered her individualistic level responses.

A more realistic way of learning the degree of change in participants' levels of parental awareness was to determine if the proportion of their responses at each level changed between the pre-and post-interviews. This data is presented in Figures 2-5. Figure 2 reveals that responses reflecting the two lower levels of parental awareness (egoistic and conventional) declined from the pre-to post-interview and responses reflecting the two higher levels of parental awareness (individualistic and analytic) increased. The decline in conventional level responses was significant at the .05 level. Figure 3 indicates that conventional level participants had no analytic level responses in either the pre-or post interview. Figure 3 also reveals that conventional level participants' conventional and egoistic responses declined while their individualistic level responses increased. Figure 4 reveals that individualistic level participants had no egoistic responses during either the pre-or post-interview, and that their conventional level responses declined and their individualistic and analytic responses increased during their experience with the learning program. Figure 5 indicates that the analytic level parent, like the individualistic participants, had no egoistic responses during both the pre- and post-interviews. This participant's conventional and individualistic responses declined to zero from the pre-to post-interview while analytic responses increased.

(Insert Figures 2 - 5)

Theme Expression

The most general picture of change in theme expression, whether adult-focused or child-focused, was provided by a comparison of the proportion of adult-focused Restrict theme expressions and child-focused Support theme expressions by participants in the pre-and post-interviews. This data, collected for the two Suburban Site groups and the University Site group is reported in Figure 6. Figure 6 indicates that the proportion of Support theme cluster responses increase in relation to that of Restrict theme cluster responses at each higher level of parental awareness. A one-way ANOVA analysis on this data indicated a highly significant relationship ($F=13.78$, $df=3$, $p<.001$). Figure 7 indicates that, pre-interview expressions reflecting the Restrict and Support theme clusters were nearly equal. Restrict theme cluster responses declined from their pre=interview level while support theme cluster responses increased. These changes were significant at the .005 level (one tailed test, $t=3.06$, $df=16$). Conventional level participants had more Restrict theme cluster expressions than Support theme cluster expressions during the pre-interview. By the post interview, Restrict Theme responses had declined and Support responses increased to the point where Support responses slightly superseded restrict responses. Individualistic and Analytic level participants started out with an overriding tendency to express Support rather than Restrict themes and that for the Analytic level participant, this tendency was

strengthened further in the post-interview. Their pre=interview patterns with respect to the two theme cluster contrast sharply with the pre=interview pattern of Conventional participants, who in the pre-interview expressed more Restrict themes than Support themes.

(Figure 6- 7)

Also see the Appendix for examples of conversations of parents at each level of the awareness scale and theme expression.

Conclusions

Parental growth that occurred during parents' experiences with the instructional program was most evident in theme expression. The increasing predominance of Support themes expression suggests that parents on the whole became more child-focused and less self-and-culture focused in their perspectives. Parents verbally expressed more awareness of deeper understanding of their child as a person and of implications for their child and their roles as parents. There also was a decrease in expressions regarding the parenting topics that reflected the parenting role as meeting personal needs and wants.

Educational Importance of the Study.

The study investigated a developmental approach to parent education based on a view of parenting as a growth process. The data support the conclusion that such an orientation to parent education can generate deep and significant cognitive changes in parents that represent growth. While the length of the program probably is insufficient to determine if changes in levels of parental awareness can be substantiated, changes that did occur in theme expression suggest that cognitive changes occurred. The relationship between theme expression and parental awareness levels needs further investigation. The data from this study suggests that themes were important cognitive growing points and set the stage for level shifts in parental awareness.

Parents in this study often commented that they had never before thought about the things they were being engaged in thinking about. It seems likely, that if participants' thought processes were stimulated as a result of their participation in the program, growth-producing thinking is likely to occur at times beyond the program sessions. Thus, such a program that focuses on parental growth may act as a catalyst that sets in motion thought processes that are self-sustained after the program ends. Parental awareness and the kind of cognitive development sought are difficult phenomenon to "prove" in the traditional sense of research because of difficulty in measuring them. They may be sufficiently observed through clinical rather than research methods. Despite such difficulties and possibilities, it is anticipated that the study reported here, by documenting parental growth in terms of cognition and by suggesting ways of supporting such growth through education, will set the stage for studies that focus on revealing the difficulties and perceiving the possibilities.

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APPENDICES

A Developmental Map of Parental Awareness

Child

Issues	Parental Awareness Level I. Egoistic	II. Conventional	III. Subjective-Individualistic	IV. Analytic
I. Developmental Influences	either/or passive recipient or impervious to experience	filtering or processing experience	interaction of child and environment	interacting systems-different levels of influence
II. Subjectivity	thoughts and feelings a projection of parental experience	how children think and feel	how this child thinks and feels	introspective psychological self-system
III. Personality	concrete and physicalistic	"type" of child--affective characteristics	stable emotional individuality	psychological self-system in continual process
Relationship Issues IV. Communication and Trust	in order to achieve desired aims	verbal sharing as equal exchange and fulfilling role obligations	non-verbal as well as verbal sharing--reciprocal emotional exchange	process of discovery of self and other
V. Resolving Conflict	to achieve parental comfort	fairness and obligation	communication and compromise	identifying origins to achieve uderstanding

Parenting

Issues	Parental Awareness Level I. Egoistic	II. Conventional	III. Subjective-Individualistic	IV. Analytic
VI. Discipline and Authority	instrumental control or helpless resignation	considering intentions to instill values	addressing causes to develop personal awareness and values	flexible methods to facilitate process of growth
VII. Meeting Needs	what parent does to ensure desirable outcome	emotional needs--different needs for different types of children	needs learned individually through child	psychological need systems--deep needs and more superficial needs
VIII. Learning and Evaluating Parenting	experience teaches--parenting evaluated by parental effort and child product	standard of parenting from external sources--parenting evaluated by conformity to standard	relativity of standards--contribution of the child to parental learning--parenting evaluated by quality of relationship and of child's development	process of self-awareness and growth of parent and child in the relationship

C. M. Newberger. (1977).

SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT THEME CLUSTER	RESTRICT DEVELOPMENT THEME CLUSTER
SUPPORT convey trust, interest, encouragement; provide an enriching environment that assists the other person in meeting their needs and pursuing their interests	**CONTROL** direct other person's thoughts, feelings, actions, and activities for purposes that do not include that person's needs or interests
RECIPROCITY exchange, mutual give and take, turn-taking	**INTRUSIVENESS** interfere with other person's goals and activities
RESPONSIVENESS respond to other person's needs in ways that meet them	**UNRESPONSIVENESS** actions not connected to other person's needs
SENSITIVITY accurately read other person's cues, signals, messages	**INSENSITIVITY** miss other person's cues, signals, messages

CONTRASTING THEMES RELATED TO THE CAPACITY TO SUPPORT HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Table 1.

Profile of Parent Groups: Gender

	Total		Female		Male	
Group	N	%	N	%	N	%
Suburban Mothers 1	9	*29*	9	*100*	0	*0*
Suburban Mothers 2	8	*26*	8	*100*	0	*0*
Outreach	4	*13*	3	*75*	1	*25*
University	4	*13*	3	*75*	1	*25*
Teens	6	*19*	4	*67*	2	*33*
Total	31	*100*	27	*87*	4	*13*

Table 2

Profile of Parent Groups: Age in Years

	Total		18-24		25-30		31-35		36-40	
Group	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Suburban Mothers 1	9	*29*	0	*0*	5	*16*	2	*6*	2	*6*
Suburban Mothers 2	8	*26*	0	*0*	3	*10*	3	*10*	2	*6*
Outreach	4	*13*	1	*3*	2	*6*	1	*3*	0	*0*
University	4	*13*	1	*3*	1	*3*	0	*0*	2	*6*
Teens	6	*19*	6	*19*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*
Total	31	*100*	8	*25*	11	*35*	6	*20*	6	*19*

Table 3

Profile of Parent Groups: Highest Level of Formal Schooling Completed

	Total		8th Grade		High School		Tech. Col.		Some Col. No Degree		AA Degree		BA Degree		Master's		Doctorate	
Group	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sub. Moth. 1	9	*29*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	4	*13*	2	*6*	3	*10*	0	*0*	0	*0*
Sub. Moth. 2	8	*26*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	2	*6*	0	*0*	5	*16*	1	*3*	0	*0*
Outre.	4	*13*	0	*0*	2	*6*	2	*6*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*
Univ.	4	*13*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	1	*3*	0	*0*	1	*3*	0	*0*	2	*6*
Teens	6	*19*	6	*19*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*
Total	31	*100*	6	*19*	2	*6*	2	*6*	7	*23*	2	*6*	9	*29*	1	*3*	2	*6*

Table 4.

Profile of Parent Groups: Participants' Children

Group	Number of Participants	Total Number of Children	Gender of Children		Children's Mean Age in Years	
			Female	Male	Oldest or Only	Youngest
Suburban Mothers 1	9	16	5	11	2.61	1.07
Suburban Mothers 2	8	12	5	7	2.14	1.04
Outreach	4	6	3	3	3.71	2.5
University	4	4	3	1	2.07	-
Teens	6	7	5	2	1.81	.58

table 5

Level of Parental Awareness

Group	Total	Egoistic		Conventional		Individualistic		Analytic	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Suburban Mothers 1	8*	0	*0*	7	*24*	1	*3*	0	*0*
Suburban Mothers 2	8	0	*0*	6	*21*	2	*7*	0	*0*
Outreach	4	3	*10*	1	*3*	0	*0*	0	*0*
University	4	0	*0*	2	*7*	1	*3*	1	*3*
Teens	5*	0	*0*	5	*17*	0	*0*	0	*0*
Total	29	3	*10*	21	*72*	4	*14*	1	*3*

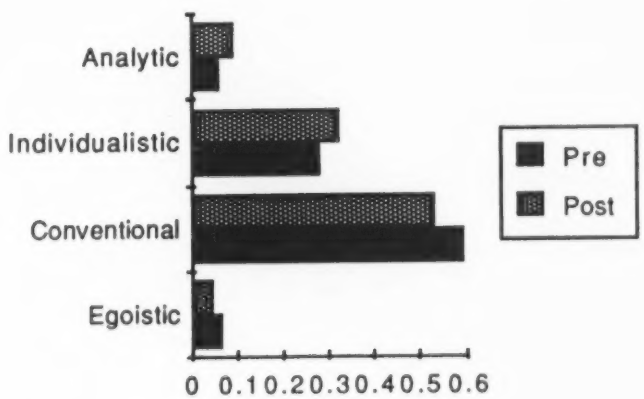

Figure 2. Change in proportion of responses reflecting each level of parental awareness for all participants (N=17).

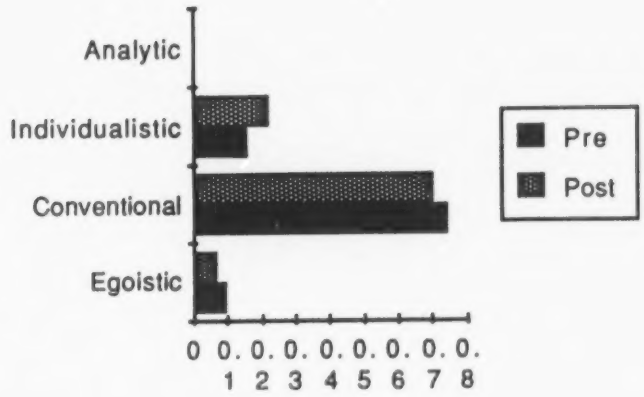

Figure 3. Change in proportion of responses reflecting each level of parental awareness for Conventional level participants (N=12).

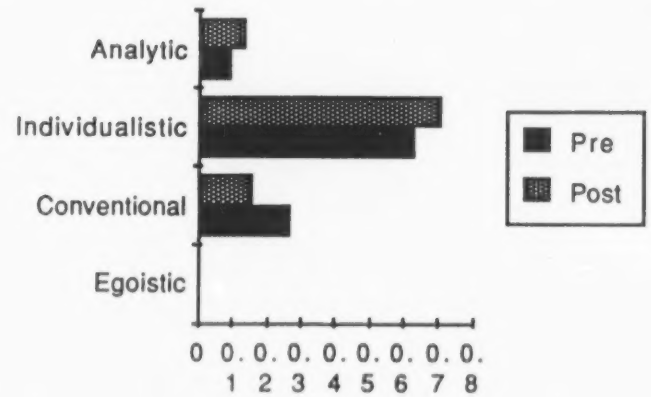

Figure 4. Change in proportion of responses reflecting each level of parental awareness for Individualistic level participants (N=4).

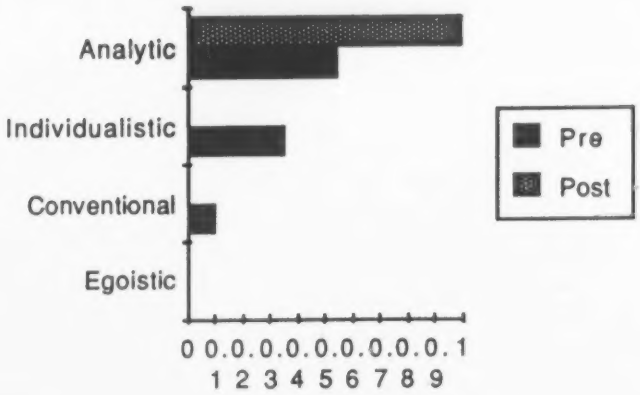

Figure 5. Change in proportion of responses reflecting each level of parental awareness for Analytic level participant (N=1).

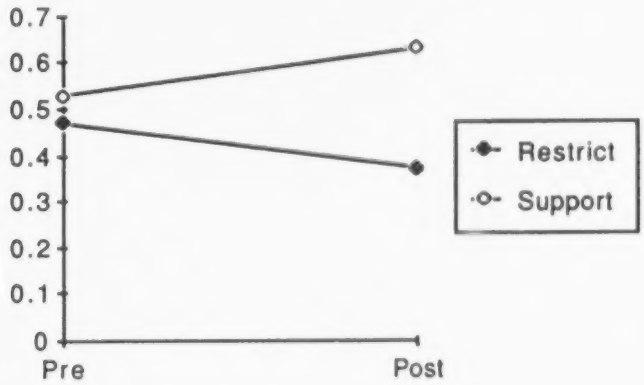

Figure 6. Change in Restrict and Support theme cluster responses for all participants (N=17).

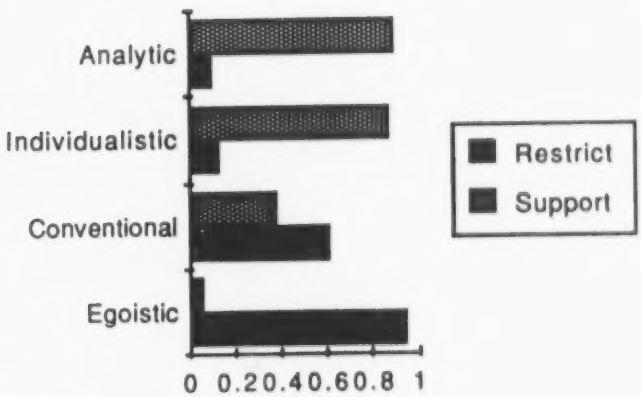

Figure 7. Proportion of Restrict and Support theme cluster expressions in pre-interview by level of parental awareness.

EXAMPLES OF LEVELS OF AWARENESS AND THEME EXPRESSION

SENSIVITY

- Accurately reads other person's cues, signals and messages.
- Senses child's verbal and nonverbal states or communications
- Empathy or child perspective taking

EXAMPLES

Q. What do you enjoy doing with your child?

LEVEL C- (SUBJECTIVE-INDIVIDUALISTIC)

A. (OS 031) " We share in pretty much everything we do during the day. He is already helping me scrub. He likes to have a rag and wipe things. he is just real observant about what ever is going on around him. He likes to watch for things as we drive, flags and will just yell when he sees something move. He likes doors so he may just play with the doors, open and close them."

Q. What do you enjoy doing with him?

LEVEL C (SUBJECTIVE-INDIVIDUALISTIC)

A. (OS 039) " Oh, I think just spending time with him here at home. We play together, um the whole day. Just now he is starting to really like to go through books, before that we would try to show him a book but he wouldn't really keep at it long. He just didn't have the attention span at that time that he has now. It is a special thing in the evening when we do try to read to him. We just go through and talk, ya know not word for word, just talk about the pictures. He likes that"

RESPONSIVE

- Actions respond to other person's needs in ways that meet and satisfy them
- Actions reflect contingencies based on cues that the adult has been able to detect from the child
- Assists the other in ways that serve the other person's interests, goals and well being

EXAMPLES

Q. What don't you enjoy doing with your child?
LEVEL C -(SUBJECTIVE-INDIVIDUALISTIC)

A. (OS 039) " Um, I don't know. I can't really think of any negatives. You just incorporate them into your lifestyle I guess. He is just a part of us. I mean you know he does slow you down. I can't take him shopping all the time. There are limitations to how much you can do and you have to be respectful of his schedule. He has to get home and take a nap. Or you want to get home and feed him after you have been away for awhile. But I don't, I mean there are not really any drawbacks."

Q. What do you expect from your child?
LEVEL B (CONVENTIONAL)

A. (RO 042) " For my three year old, I have different expectations than my year old. He is beginning to learn about rules so I have expecations of him that are very different. As the kids get older, you give them more boundaries, more responsibilities and privileges according to the boundaries that they are capable of doing. You learn from your child, you let them take the lead. You try to help them verbalize and ask them is this what you need or is that what you need?"

Q. What do you enjoy about your child?
LEVEL C- (SUBJECTIVE -INDIVIDUALISTIC)

A. (RO 046) She has always loved books. We started when was just a few months old to show her books. We have a bookshelf right under the TV there. I notice if I put her books under there, she just plops right down and will spread her books out and look at them for a really long time."

RECIPROCITY

- Mutual give and take, turn taking, and enjoyment
- Joint action and exchange
- Both partners read each other's cues accurately and are responsive to each other
- Spontaneous creation by both partners of interaction and exchange

EXAMPLES

Q. What do you enjoy doing with your child?
LEVEL C (SUBJECTIVE-INDIVIDUALISTIC)

A. (UMCC 0 52) "Well, I like to play with her with her toys and get involved in some of that imaginative play. She likes me to do that and I found that a lot of fun. I have always enjoyed interacting with her. We sit and have wonderful conversations either in play or during the day interacting in her imaginative play. It is more fun since she started to develop her verbal skills more. She will say mom, help me, so I will help her in her play."

Q. Tell me about your child.
LEVEL C (SUBJECTIVE-INDIVIDUALISTIC)

A. (OS 035) "He is real bossy now. That's the first thing that comes to mind. We have this thing where he will boss me around, just real independent, in and out. So it is kind of an order and I will say 'aye aye captain', and he will say 'blye' and salute. One day I said 'yes sir' and he said 'Captain Blye'. He remembers."

SUPPORT

- Provides an enriching environment that assists the other person in meeting their needs and pursuing their interests
- Creates and structures the environment by providing opportunities that help the other grow and develop
- Conveys trust interest and encouragement

EXAMPLES

Q. What is hard about being a parent?

LEVEL D (ANALYTIC)

A. (UMCC 053) " I wrestle with the discipline and that balance between kind of stifling her and not supporting her and I really do think it starts very young. That is a piece that I feel is the hardest for me. I do not want to squelch her or over correct her. How much is too much? Everything is moderation, I guess. The united front between my wife and myself and my daughter. Being in a relationship that would be one that is more shared, how are we doing or going to do this, as opposed to me relating to my daughter and my wife relating our daughter separately. That it is a little more systematic or systemic I guess as opposed to systematic. That is part of the challenge."

Q. What is it like being a parent?

LEVEL C (SUBJECTIVE-INDIVIDUALISTIC)

A. (RO 045) "It is probably one of the most rewarding yet responsible jobs I have had. It is rewarding seeing this little person grow and develop and to know that you have had some part in guiding them. The sense of knowing that no matter what they do or say that they are still yours. It is a big responsibility in knowing that there are so many ways that you as a parent could fail to provide the best home for your child. I mean I don't want to limit my child in reaching their potential but there are so many traps that a parent can fall into. That and giving them a good sense of who they are, their self worth and knowing that they are loved. They need to feel that they are a special person in order that they can survive as an adult. Without a good sense fo self worth, so many other things can go wrong in their lives. As parents that's what we can do is provide them with a good sense of self worth and love."

INSENSITIVE

- Misses other person's cues, signals or messages.
- Misinterprets cues or messages due to ignorance or lack of focused attention
- Child's cues are interpreted from an adult perspective

EXAMPLES

Q. Why might these activities be enjoyable?

LEVEL B - (CONVENTIONAL)

A. (RO 041) " It is nice for me because I can get my hands free. When she was an infant, she wanted to be held all the time. She liked a lot of attention and if it wasn't for the swing. It seemed like I was always doing things with her. The swing was nice so I could get things done."

Q. What do you enjoy doing with your child?

LEVEL B (CONVENTIONAL)

A. (RO 043) "Playing together and going outside, doing something in the kitchen. Sometimes I put the gate up there so they can't go in the kitchen, but they go crazy and start fighting. Giving me a headache, so what we do is somebody will take the other kid out."

UNRESPONSIVE

- Actions are not connected to other person's needs, do not consider the other's perspectives or states

- Actions reflect lack of knowledge about child, or an inability or unwillingness to do what one knows would be an appropriate response

EXAMPLES

Q. What is difficult about parenting?

LEVEL B (CONVENTIONAL)

A. (UMCC 051) " It is hard for me because I have a very short temper and so I get mad at things that maybe other people wouldn't. I am a student, and a mom so if I am in a crabby mood, I tend to lose my temper a lot more easily. I sometimes just sit there and hold my head and listen to him cry and scream; other times I just give in to what he is doing because it makes him stop and sometimes I deal with it fine."

Q. What is difficult about parenting?

LEVEL B - (CONVENTIONAL)

A. (OS 036) " Well, discipline I guess. Because I feel very strongly now. Maybe that will change as my girl grows older. If she is acting up I think that the time out technique is very effective, and just say okay, go sit in the corner. I think that will be an effective tool."

INTRUSIVE

- Interfere with or prevents other person's goals, interests, and activities
- Intent to be helpful, but is unaccompanied by sensitivity to the other person
- Failure to sense another's preference and enjoyment of doing something on their own
- "Barging in"

EXAMPLES

Q. What don't you enjoy doing with your child?

LEVEL B (CONVENTIONAL)

A. (RO 041) " She's got a strong will, if she wants to do something, she is head strong, and it is real hard to steer her into something else. Like when she is outside. She will kick and yell and scream when I bring her in from outside because she doesn't like that. Yeah. She doesn't like driving in the car either and she will kick and scream there too."

Q. What don't you enjoy doing with her?

LEVEL B - (CONVENTIONAL)

A. (UMCC 054) " She is getting difficult to put to bed, um at times. Sometimes she goes real easily, but her dad comes home from work about the time that she goes to bed and, uh, if I can't get her to bed before he comes home, then she doesn't go until really late. Or if I get her in just at the time he is coming home and she hears him, then she has to get up and so that is becoming a challenge."

CONTROL

- Power over another
- Control another's activities unnecessarily
- Influence or direct other person's thoughts, feelings, actions and activities for purposes that do not consider other person's need or interest

EXAMPLES

Q. What is difficult about parenting?

LEVEL A (EGOISTIC)

A. (STLP 049) " Well, I don't know. It is hard to control him sometimes, and I think that is mostly the hardest part. Sometimes, to try to control him and you know, to get him to behave. That is hard."

Q. What do you enjoy doing with your child?

LEVEL A (EGOISTIC)

A. (STLP 050) " Everything. I like to teach her things. I got her coloring books, reading books and we play games. I have had a very hard time with her and in the long run it was all worth it because she is so good now. She listens, I mean sometimes I had to warn her, I'd just sit down and say. Hey, if you are not going to do something, then you can either sit there for 15 minutes or you get a slap on the hand. You can't do nothing all day, just stay in the house. And half the time she would just stay in the house."